

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A holding means for holding articles having upward and downward facing surfaces onto a conveyor for transporting the articles thereon

~~comprises;~~ comprising:

a base suitable for the downward facing surface to sit upon;

a grip part positioned relatively upwardly of the base and suitable to bear on the upward facing surface; and

wherein at least one of the base and grip part being moveable so that the article may be positioned between the base and the grip part, and the base and grip part may then be brought closer together to grip the article between the base and the grip part, and subsequently moved further apart to release the article.

2. (Original) A holding means according to claim 1 which comprises;  
a base having an upper part able to mate against a downward facing surface of an article, and a grip part having a grip means able to mate against an upward facing surface of the article, the grip part being moveable relative to the base between upper and lower positions of the grip part, such that when the grip part is in its upper position there is a gap between the grip means and the upper part of the base into which gap at least part of the article may be placed, and when the grip part is in the lower position the grip means bears on the article and the downward facing surface of the article mates with the upper part of the base so that the article is held between the grip means and the base.

3-4. (Canceled).

5. (Previously presented) A holding means according to claim 2, wherein the grip part comprises an up-down extending shaft having a grip means adjacent the upper end of the shaft.

6. (Original) A holding means according to claim 5 wherein the grip means comprises a grip arm connected with the shaft and extending in a direction transverse to the shaft up-down direction, the grip arm being able to bear upon the article.

7. (Original) A holding means according to claim 6 wherein the grip means comprises two grip arms, between which the article may fit, with both arms extending in the transverse direction.

8. (Original) A holding means according to claim 6 wherein the grip part also comprises a support for the article which can fit underneath the article and support it whilst the grip part is in its upper position.

9. (Currently amended) A holding means according to claim 8 wherein the support comprises a support arm ~~one or more support arm~~ that extends transverse to the up-down direction of the shaft to a remote end of the support arm.

10. (Previously presented) A holding means according to claim 2 wherein the base includes a guide to support and guide the grip part in its upward and downward movement between upper and lower positions.

11. (Currently amended) A holding means according to ~~claim 1~~ claim 2 wherein the grip part is biased toward its lower position.

12. (Previously presented) A holding means according to claim 8 wherein the base has a receiving capacity for the support, and into which the support may be received when the grip part is in its lower position.

13. (Original) A holding means according to claim 12 wherein the up-down depth dimension of the receiving cavity is greater than the up-down thickness dimension of the support so that when the support is received in the receiving cavity with the grip part in

its lower position the upper surface of the support is below the upper surface of the upper part of the base.

14. (Currently amended) A conveyor system for the transport of ~~articles~~ an article having upward and downward facing surfaces in a conveying direction, ~~provided with one or more holding means as claimed in claim 1~~ comprising holding means for holding said article, where said holding means comprises:

(a) a base suitable for the downward facing surface to sit upon, and having an upper part able to mate against said downward facing surface of said article; and

(b) a grip part positioned relatively upwardly of the base and having a grip means able to mate against an upward facing surface of the article,

wherein the grip part is moveable, relative to the base, between upper and lower positions of the grip part, such that when the grip part is in its upper position there is a gap between the grip means and the upper part of the base into which gap at least part of the article may be placed, and when the grip part is in the lower position the grip means bears on the article and the downward facing surface of the article mates with the upper part of the base so that the article is held between the grip means and the base.

15. (Currently amended) A conveyor system according to claim 14 , further comprising ~~incorporating~~ a loader means adjacent to the conveyor system and arranged to carry an article into a position relative to the holding means when the grip means is in its upper position, such that the downward facing surface of the article is above the part of the base and the upward facing surface of the article is below the grip means.

16. (Currently amended) A conveyor system according to claim 14 , further comprising ~~incorporating~~ an unloader means adjacent to the conveyor system and arranged to unload an article ~~articles~~ from the holding means, said unloader being configured to receive an article gripped by the holding means, prior to movement of the grip part into its upward position to release the article from the holding means.

17. (Currently amended) A conveyor system according to claim 14, ~~provided with one or more~~ further comprising:

(a) means to direct a downwardly moving flow of purified air over an article carried by said conveyor system; and

(b) a processing station arranged adjacent to the conveyor system to perform one or more an operation on an article articles carried by the conveyor system, where said conveyor system is downstream of the processing station relative to said laminar flow of purified air.

18. (Currently amended) A conveyor system according to claim 17, wherein said ~~a~~-processing station is configured to perform a vial-filling process in which a vial with a closure made of a heat-fusible puncturable material is conveyed by the conveyor system to a position adjacent the processing station, and the processing station punctures the vial closure by passing a hollow filling needle through the closure, introduces a material into the vial via the needle , and withdraws the needle.

19. (Currently amended) A conveyor system according to claim 17, wherein said ~~a~~-processing station is configured to perform a process in which a puncture hole in a vial closure made of a heat-fusible puncturable material is sealed using a source of heat.

20. -23. (Canceled).

24. (Currently amended) A conveyor system according to claim 18 ~~provided with a processing station to perform a process in which a vial with its closure made of a heat-fusible puncturable material is punctured by passing a hollow filling needle through the closure, a material introduced into the vial via the needle and the needle then withdrawn, provided with means to resist~~ where said holding means resists the upward force of withdrawing the filling needle ~~-, said means comprising a means which and holds the vial at a position which is downstream relative to the closure in a~~ relative to said downwardly moving flow of purified air.

25. (Currently amended) A process in which a vial with upward and downward facing surfaces and a closure made of a heat-fusible puncturable material is conveyed in a conveying direction by a conveyor system:

(a) to a position adjacent a processing station which punctures the vial closure by passing a hollow filling needle through the closure, introduces a material into the vial via the needle, and withdraws the needle, and then ~~or~~

(b) to a position adjacent a processing station which ~~performs a process in which~~ seals a puncture hole in said a vial closure ~~made a heat fusible puncturable material is sealed~~ using a source of heat,

wherein said conveyor system comprises holding means for holding said vial, said holding means comprising:

(a) a base suitable for the downward facing surface to sit upon; and

(b) a grip part positioned relatively upwardly of the base and suitable to bear on the upward facing surface;

wherein at least one of the base and grip part being moveable so that the vial may be positioned between the base and the grip part, and the base and grip part may then be brought closer together to grip the vial between the base and the grip part, and subsequently moved further apart to release the vial.

26. (Currently amended) A conveyor system according to claim 17, further comprising ~~processing station for performing an operation in a laminar upstream to downstream direction flow of purified air which comprises: a processing apparatus for performing the operation upon the article,~~ an aerodynamic shroud around at least part of the processing station ~~apparatus~~ and positioned such that a leading surface of the aerodynamic shroud is upstream of the processing station relative to said flow of purified air ~~apparatus~~.

27. – 28. (Canceled).

29. (Currently amended) A processing station ~~according to claim 26,~~ for use in a downwardly moving laminar flow of air and mounted adjacent to a conveyor system,

said processing station comprising an aerodynamic shroud around at least part of the processing station, and wherein said conveyor system ~~which~~ is downstream of the processing station relative to the airflow and adapted to transport articles to a position adjacent the processing station.

30. (Canceled).

31. (Currently amended) A processing station according to claim 29 ~~claim 26~~ wherein ~~the~~ said aerodynamic shroud comprises two part-shrouds, elongated in a direction perpendicular to the direction of the laminar flow of air and to the plane of the cross section, and hinged together at their respective leading edges to rotate about a hinge axis parallel to the elongate direction.

32-33. (Canceled).

34. (New) A process according to claim 25, wherein said process is conducted in a downwardly moving laminar flow of purified air, and said processing station comprises an aerodynamic shroud around at least part of the processing station, and wherein said conveyor system is downstream of the processing station relative to the airflow.

35. (New) A process according to claim 34, wherein said aerodynamic shroud comprises two part-shrouds, elongated in a direction perpendicular to the direction of the laminar flow of air and to the plane of the cross section, and hinged together at their respective leading edges to rotate about a hinge axis parallel to the elongate direction.